

INFLUENTIAL INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES¹

- **Franklin D. Roosevelt** - Franklin Delano Roosevelt (January 30, 1882 – April 12, 1945), He was the 32nd President of the United States. Elected to four terms in office, he served from 1933 to 1945, and is the only U.S. president to have served more than two terms of office. In August 1921, while the Roosevelts were vacationing at Campobello Island, New Brunswick, Roosevelt contracted an illness, at the time believed to be polio, which resulted in Roosevelt's total and permanent paralysis from the waist down. Roosevelt refused to accept that he was permanently paralyzed. He tried a wide range of therapies, including hydrotherapy. Fitting his hips and legs with iron braces, he laboriously taught himself to walk a short distance by swiveling his torso while supporting himself with a cane. In private, he used a wheelchair, but he was careful never to be seen in it in public. In 2003, a peer-reviewed study found that it was more likely that Roosevelt's paralytic illness was actually Guillain-Barré syndrome, not poliomyelitis.

- **Albert Einstein** provided the theory of relativity and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for the work he did with photoelectric effect. Characteristics, which may indicate that Einstein was a fellow Aspie: Einstein could not speak fluently at the age of nine, language delays are common in children with high functioning autism. His parents suspected that he might actually be mentally retarded. Often, children with Autism are labeled Mentally Retarded or Behaviorally Disordered. At the ceremony of induction as an American, Einstein attended without socks. Children and adults with autism and Asperger's Syndrome often have peculiar habits, extreme sensitivity to textures, and are often rated "high" on scales measuring atypicality, demonstrating odd behaviors, and seemingly lost in their own little world. Frequently, children with Asperger's struggle with finding socks that "feel right" or with a line at the toe that doesn't bother them.

- **Stephen Hawking** - Professor Stephen Hawking is a well-known example of a person with MND, and has lived for more than 40 years with the disease. Stephen Hawking: The internationally renowned Physicist, has defied time and doctor's pronouncements that he would not live 2-years beyond his 21 years of age when he was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS); also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. The symptoms are very similar to those of CP, Hawking cannot walk, talk, breathe easy, swallow and has difficulty in holding up his head. Hawking, 51, was told 30 years ago, when he was a not-very-remarkable college student.

- **Helen Keller** - (1880 - 1968) - Helen Adams Keller (June 27, 1880 – June 1, 1968) was an American author, activist and lecturer. She was the first deaf/blind person to graduate from college. She was not born blind and deaf; it was not until nineteen months of age that she came down with an illness described by doctors as "an acute congestion of the stomach and the brain", which could have possibly been scarlet fever or meningitis. The illness did not last for a particularly long time, but it left her deaf and blind. Keller went on to become a world-famous speaker and author. She is remembered as an advocate for people with disabilities amid numerous other causes.

¹ Information take from the Disabled World website, http://www.disabled-world.com/artman/publish/article_0060.shtml.

- **Ludwig Van Beethoven** - Beethoven was as we know a great source of confidence for himself and for others, being able to create music and play music even after being completely deaf is by itself quite a miracle. Although it was clear to everyone that Beethoven was but a man, he conquered his disability and led himself to being one of the greatest musicians of all time. If there was one thing that was affecting his struggle to succeed it was not only being deaf, but having to fight all the emotions that he felt inside when he had to turn around to look at the audience applause because he could not hear.

- **Stevie Wonder** - (born Steveland Hardaway Judkins on May 13, 1950, name later changed to Steveland Hardaway Morris), is an American singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and record producer. Blind from infancy, Wonder signed with Motown Records as a pre-adolescent at age twelve, and continues to perform and record for the label to this day. It is thought that he received excessive oxygen in his incubator which led to retinopathy of prematurity, a destructive ocular disorder affecting the retina, characterized by abnormal growth of blood vessels, scarring, and sometimes retinal detachment.

- **Judy Woodruff** - Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Woodruff served as the chief White House correspondent for NBC from 1977 to 1982, and covered Washington for The Today Show from 1982 - 83. She is the parent of three children including a son born with severe spina bifida. Her husband is Al Hunt, formerly of CNN and The Wall Street Journal, now Executive Editor of the Bloomberg News Washington, D.C, bureau.